ISSN 0712-7774

AARDVARK-VANAHEIM

CEREBUS

90
SEP

200 CANADA
170 IN US

N O T E • F R O M • T H E P R E S I D E N T

I was going to let my "Declaration of Independence" pass without further comment. However, a few ill-advised (and, one suspects, self-advised) editor-type types (Cat Yronwode, Rick Oliver, Richard Pini) have chosen to lob a few ineffectual defenses from the pages of creative people's comic books and in the Comics Journal.

I'll make this short, but sweet, to avoid dignifying these what-they-are's and their so-called profession.

No creative person is apt, in the middle of producing a piece of work, to say to themselves, "Gee. I really don't know what I want the next two pages of my story to be like. I think I'll phone Cat/Richard/Rick and ask them what I should do."

In point of fact, I know a number of brilliant people in this field. Frank Miller, Alan Moore, Harlan Ellison. A bunch. And I wouldn't dream of phoning them and asking them if they think my ideas for #91 are sound. And, were they to phone and ask me to advise them on their next production, I would think they were cracked. "You're Frank Miller. Do it the way Frank Miller would."

Creative people listen to you people because you make that a condition of their employment.

You're worse than useless when it comes to creativity.

You are intrusive.

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CEREBUS

NO. 90 SEPTEMBER 1986

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President

KAREN McKIEL
Administrator

GERHARD
Backgrounds, cover-colour, and tones,

Circulation
33,000

CHURCH AND STATE
a novel

•

BOOK ONE
(Cerebus 52 to Cerebus 56)
Aprés State

•

BOOK TWO
(Cerebus 57 to Cerebus 63)
Back to Iest

•

BOOK THREE
(Cerebus 64 to Cerebus 80)
Church and State

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BOOK FOUR
(Cerebus 81 to Cerebus 89)
The Sacred Wars

•

BOOK FIVE
Astoria

•

BOOK SIX
The Final Ascension

•

BOOK SEVEN
Denoument and Epilogue

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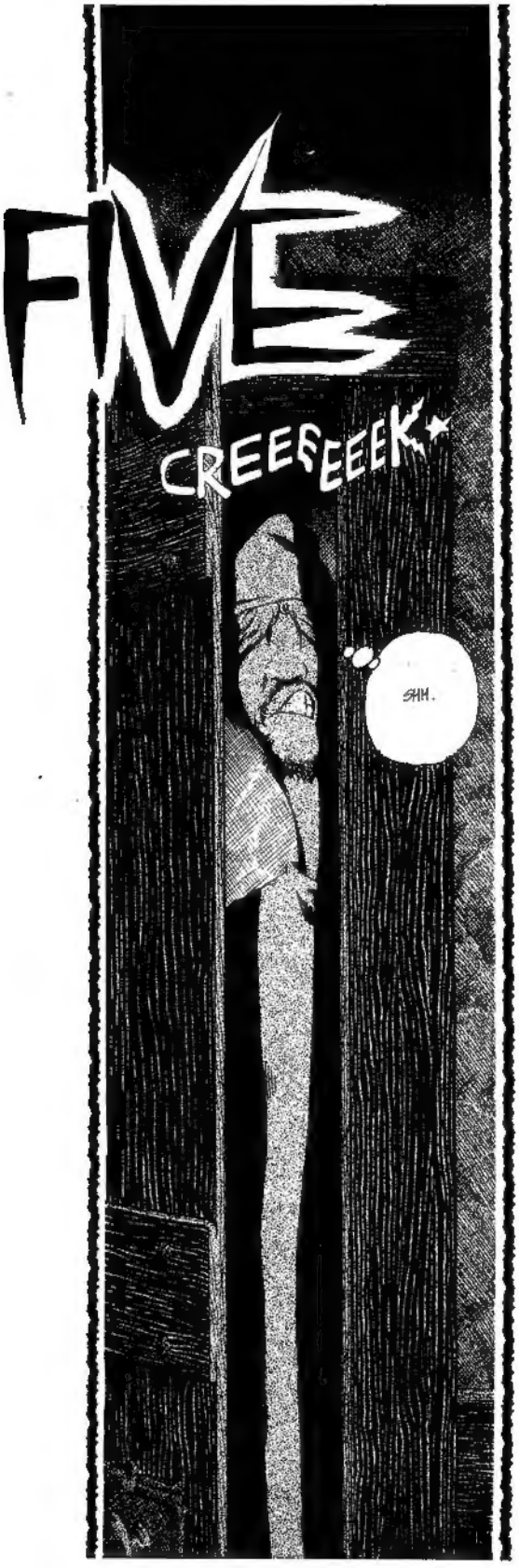
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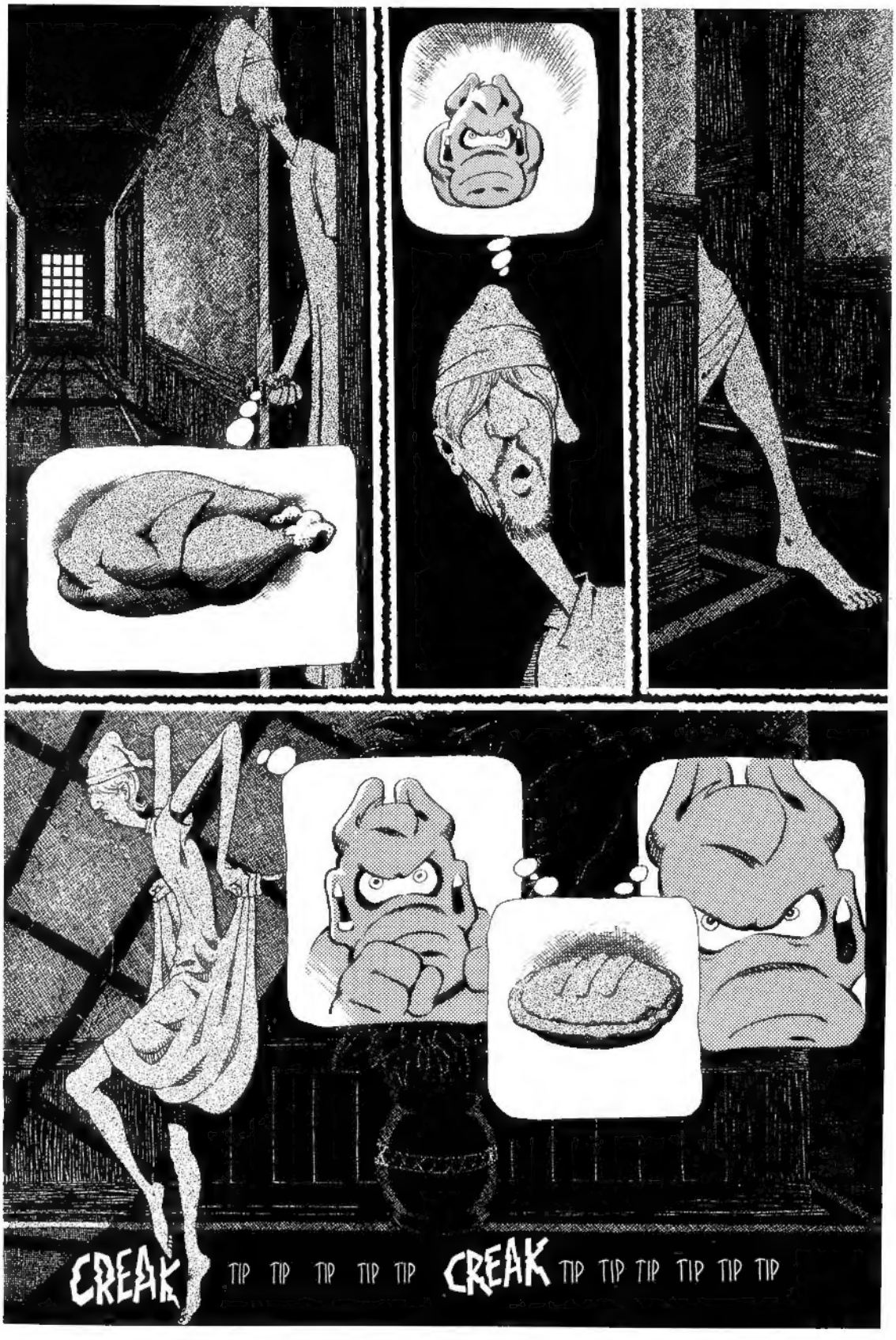
SHH.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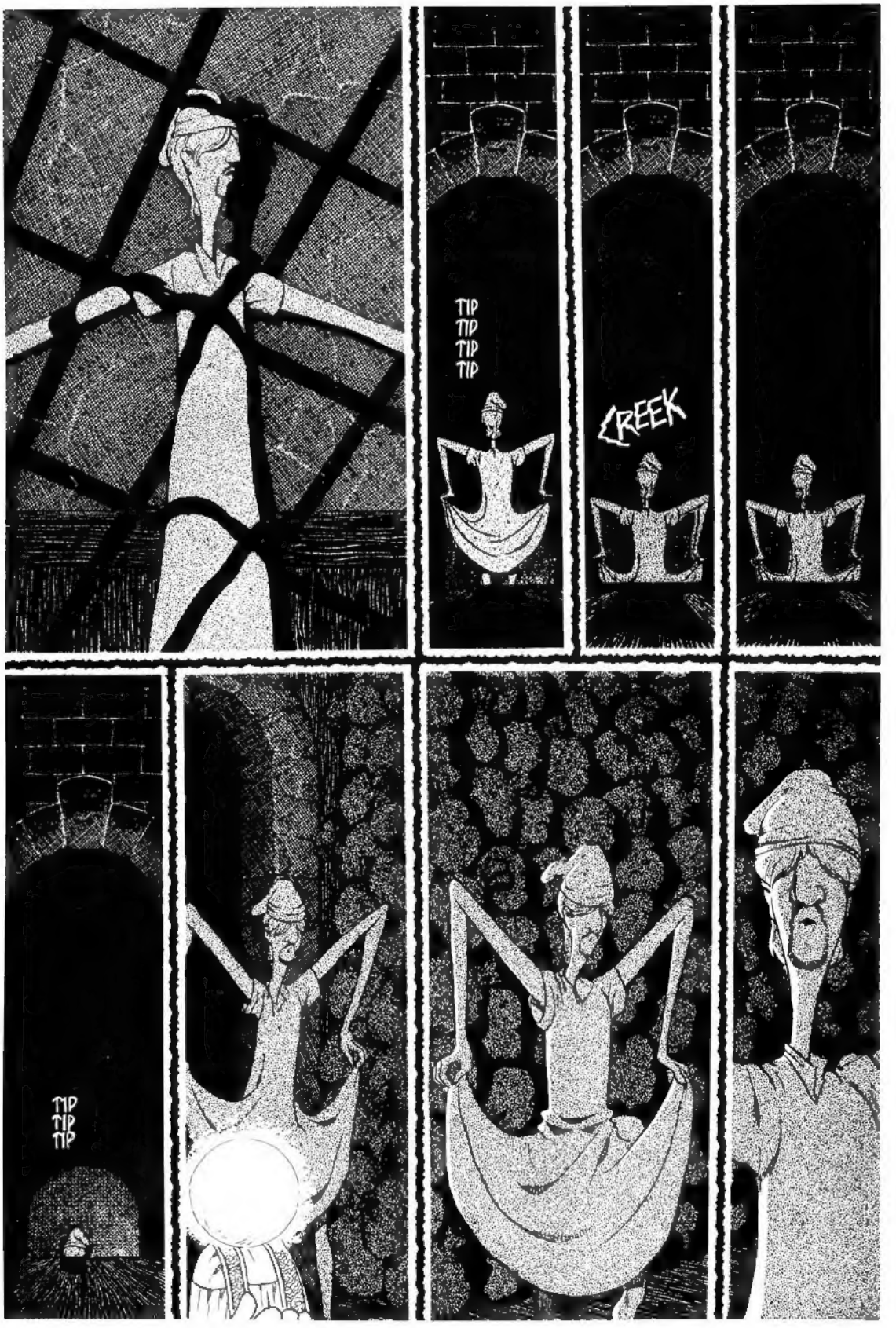
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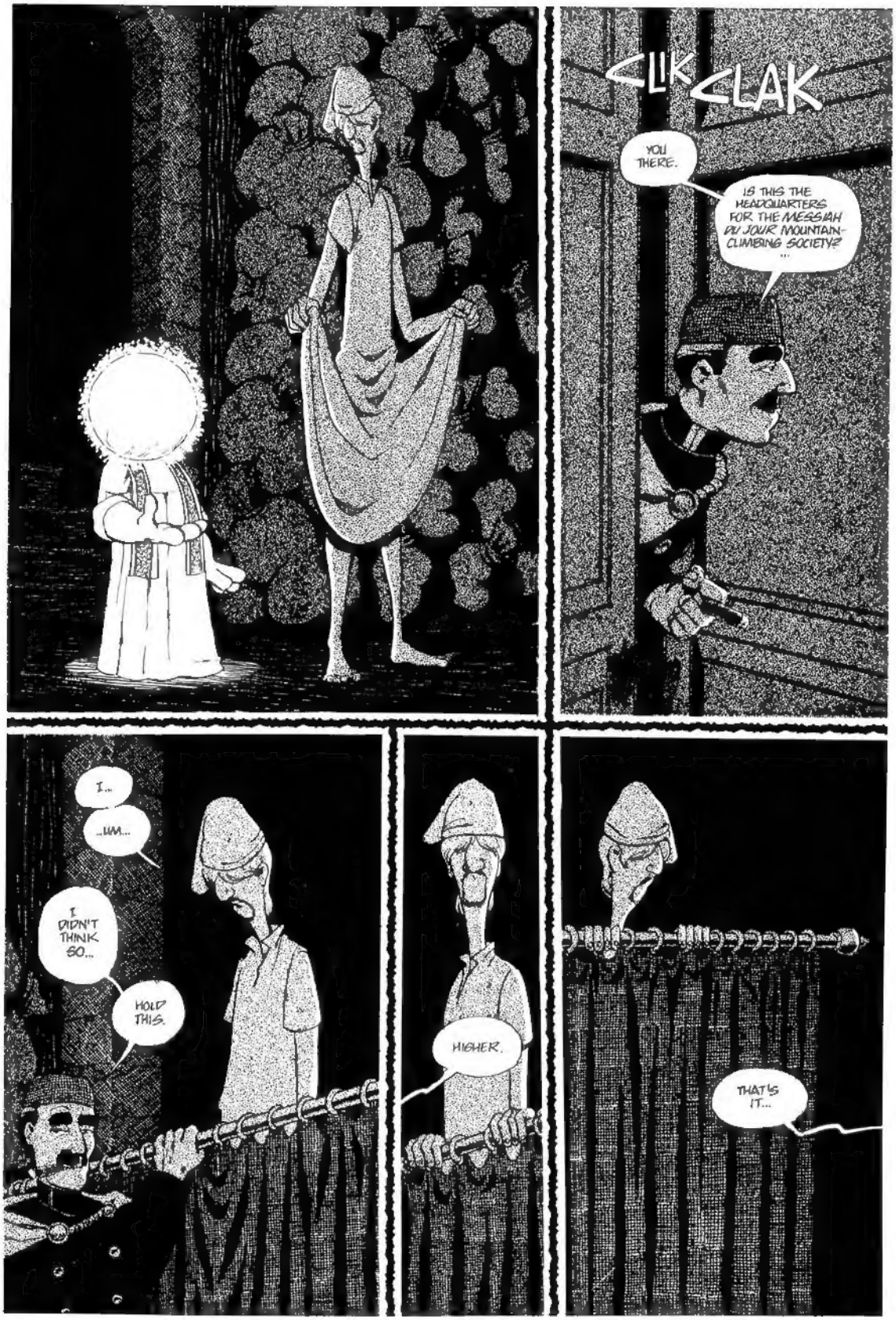
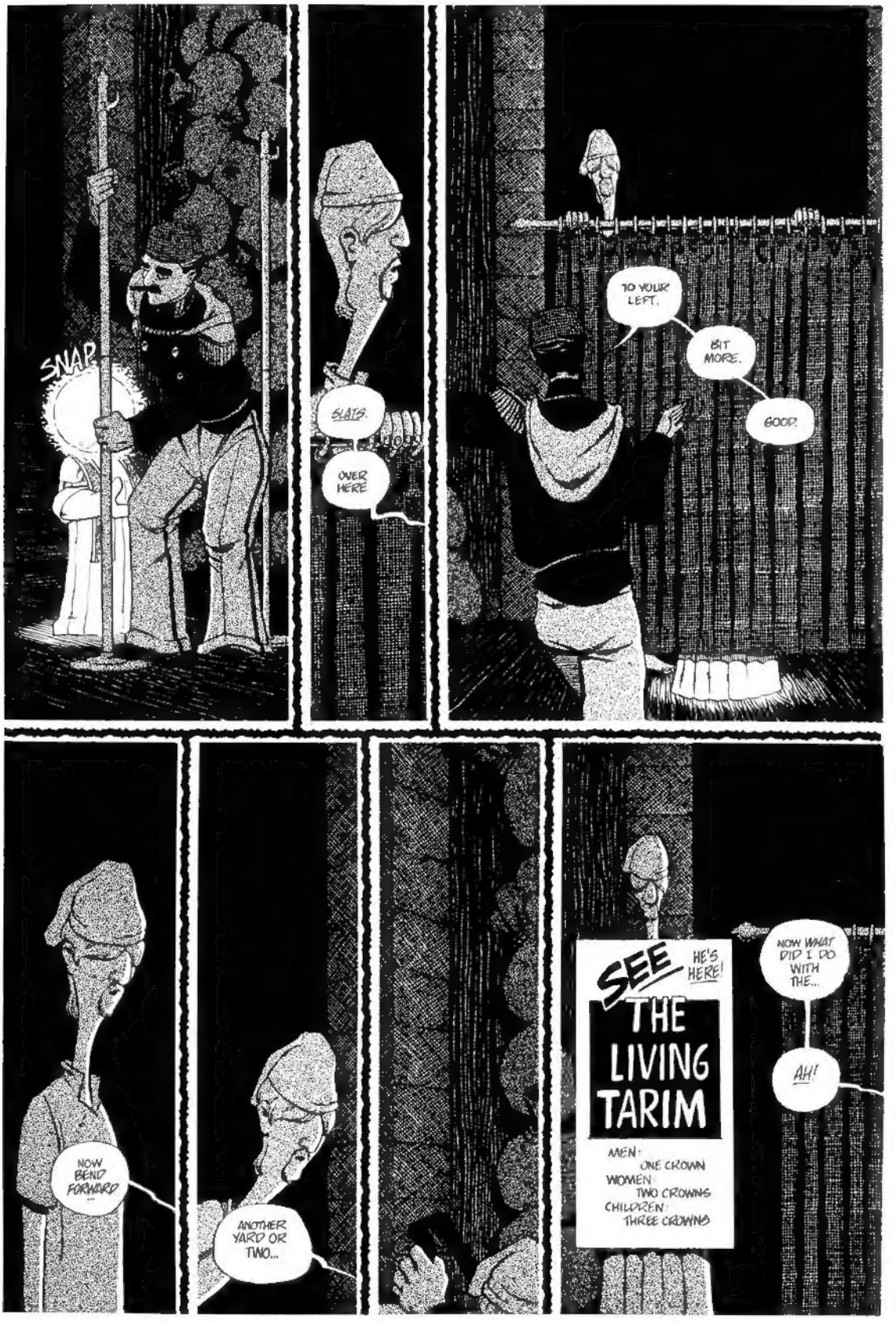

CLIK CLAK
YOU THERE.
IS THIS THE HEADQUARTERS FOR THE MESSIAH OF YOUR MOUNTAIN-CLIMBING SOCIETY?
...
I...
...UM...
I DIDN'T THINK SO...
HOLD THIS.
HIGHER.
THAT'S IT...


SNAP
SLATS.
OVER HERE
TO YOUR LEFT.
BIT MORE.
GOOD.
NOW BEND FORWARD...
ANOTHER YARD OR TWO...
SEE HE'S HERE!
THE LIVING TARIM
MEN: ONE CROWN
WOMEN: TWO CROWNS
CHILDREN: THREE CROWNS
NOW WHAT DID I DO WITH THE...
AH!

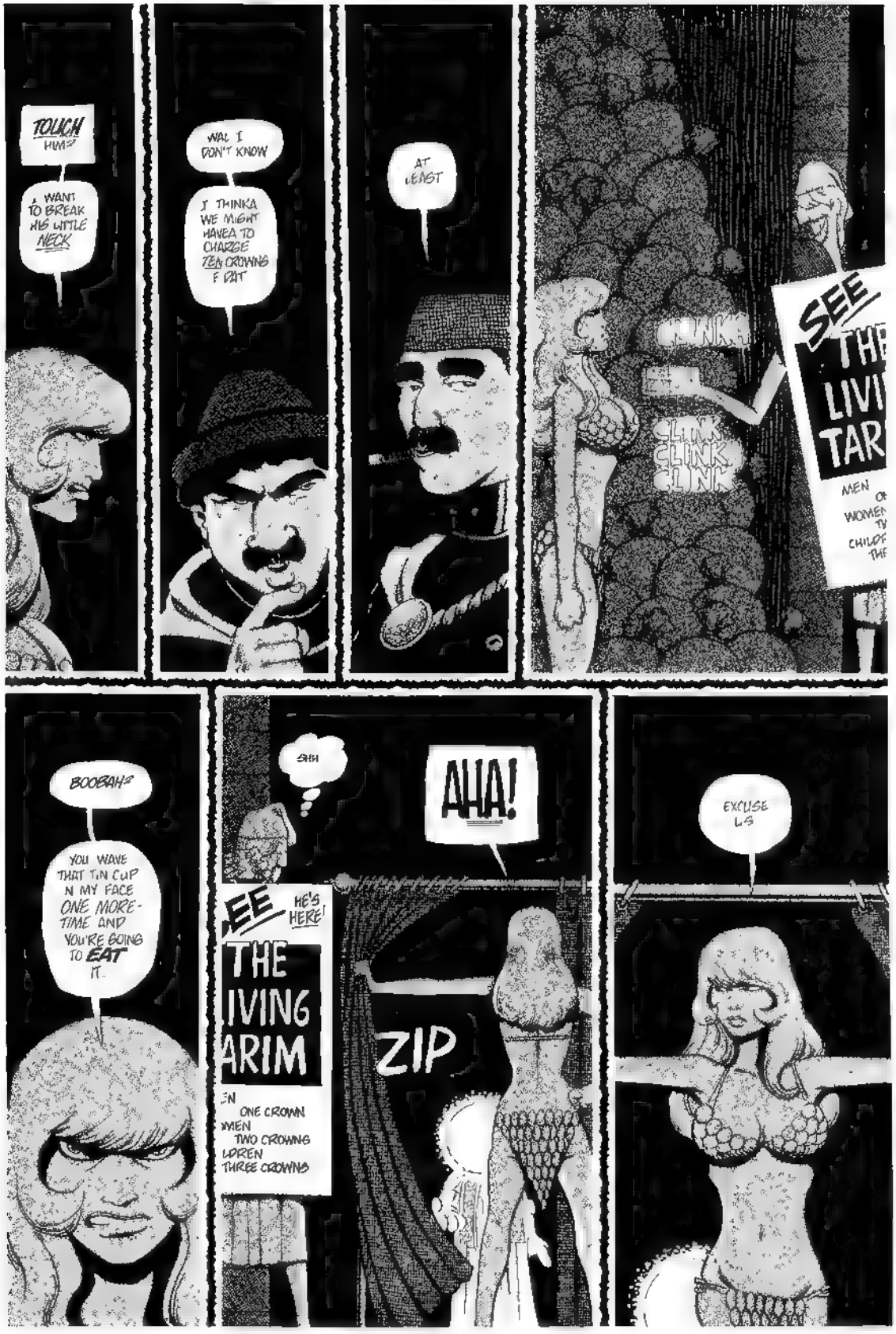
HOLD THIS IN YOUR RIGHT HAND ...
SEE HE'S HERE!
RATTLE IT BACK AND FORTH ...
MEN: ONE CROWN
WOMEN: TWO CROWNS
CHILDREN: THREE CROWNS
SEE HE'S HERE!
SMILE.
CLINK CLINK CLINKA CLINK
MEN: ONE CROWN
WOMEN: TWO CROWNS
CHILDREN: THREE CROWNS
SEE
NOW TRY AND LOOK LIFE-LIKE.
CLINK CLINK CLINKA
ONE CROWN
WOMEN: TWO CROWNS
CHILDREN: THREE CROWNS
HOWSA HE DOING?
HE'S AS READY AS HE'LL EVER BE...
ATSA NOT A-SAYING TOO MOTCH ...
WE SHOODA OPENED IN A NEW SEPRA ...
YOU WERE BORN IN NEW SEPRA AND LOOK WHAT A CATASTROPHE THAT TURNED OUT TO BE.
CLINK CLINKA CLINK
'AT'SA GOOD POINT.
I'M A-NO THINK OF THAT.
SPEAKING OF CATASTROPHES, HOW ARE THE PLANS FOR MY INAUGURATION CEREMONY COMING ALONG?

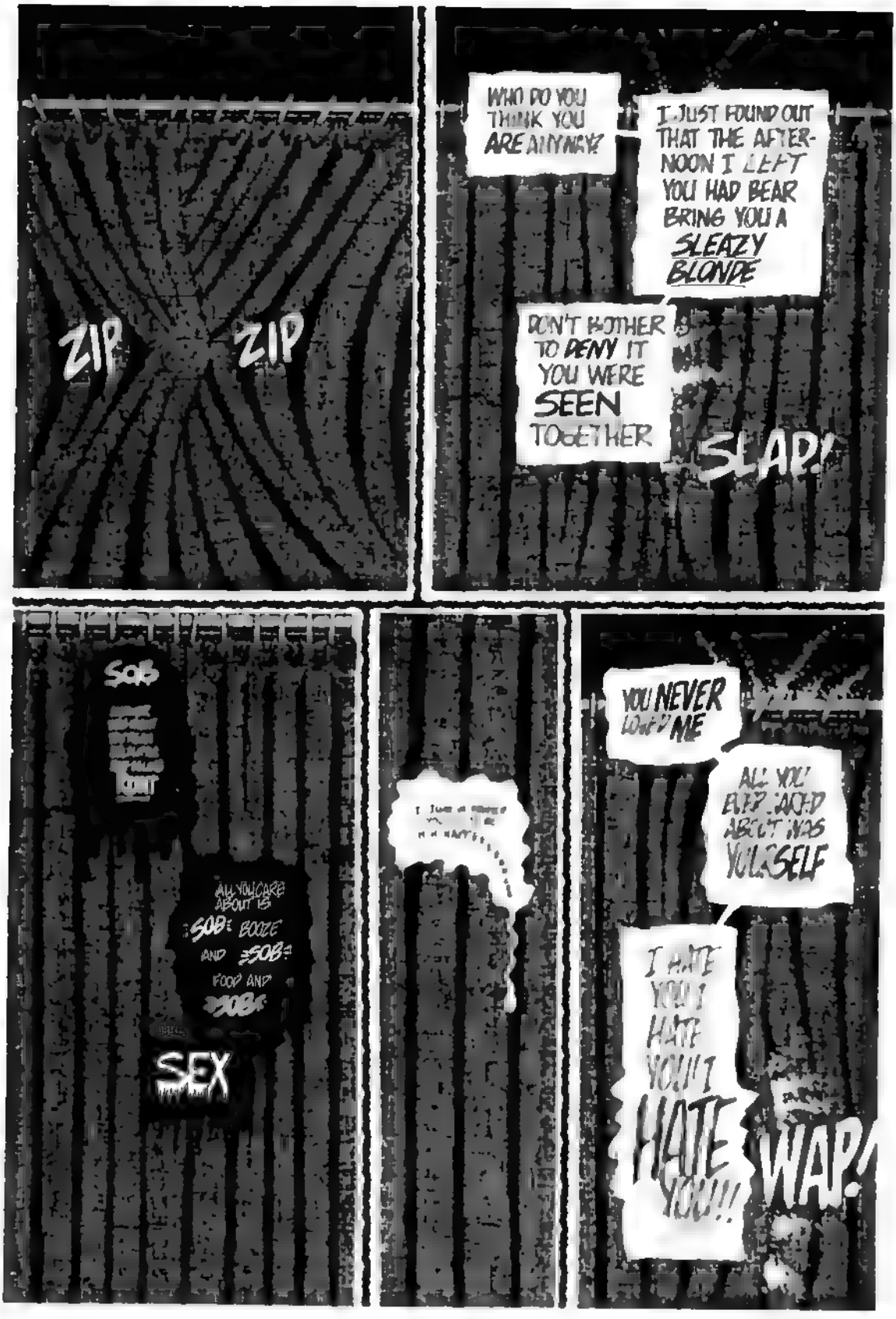
NOT-A SO GOOD.
WE RUN INTO A LITTLE-A SNAG WIT' D' KEYPUNCH SPEAKER.
KEYPUNCH SPEAKER. THAT SOUNDS SUITABLY GRISLY.
WHAT SORT OF 'SNAG'?
WE NO FIND ANYAONE SAY NICE THINGS FOR YOU IN FRONT OF EVE'YBODY ...
WHAT ABOUT MY MOTHER?
SHE'S A TOO OLD F'ME.
NO, I MEAN AS A KEYPUNCH SNAG.
SHE SAY SHE PROMISE NOT-A TO HECKLE IF YOU F'GET ABOUT D'RENT INCREASE ...
THERE'S GRATITUDE FOR YOU -- AFTER I GOT HER A DISCOUNT ON FURNITURE...
WHAT ABOUT WEISSHAUPT?

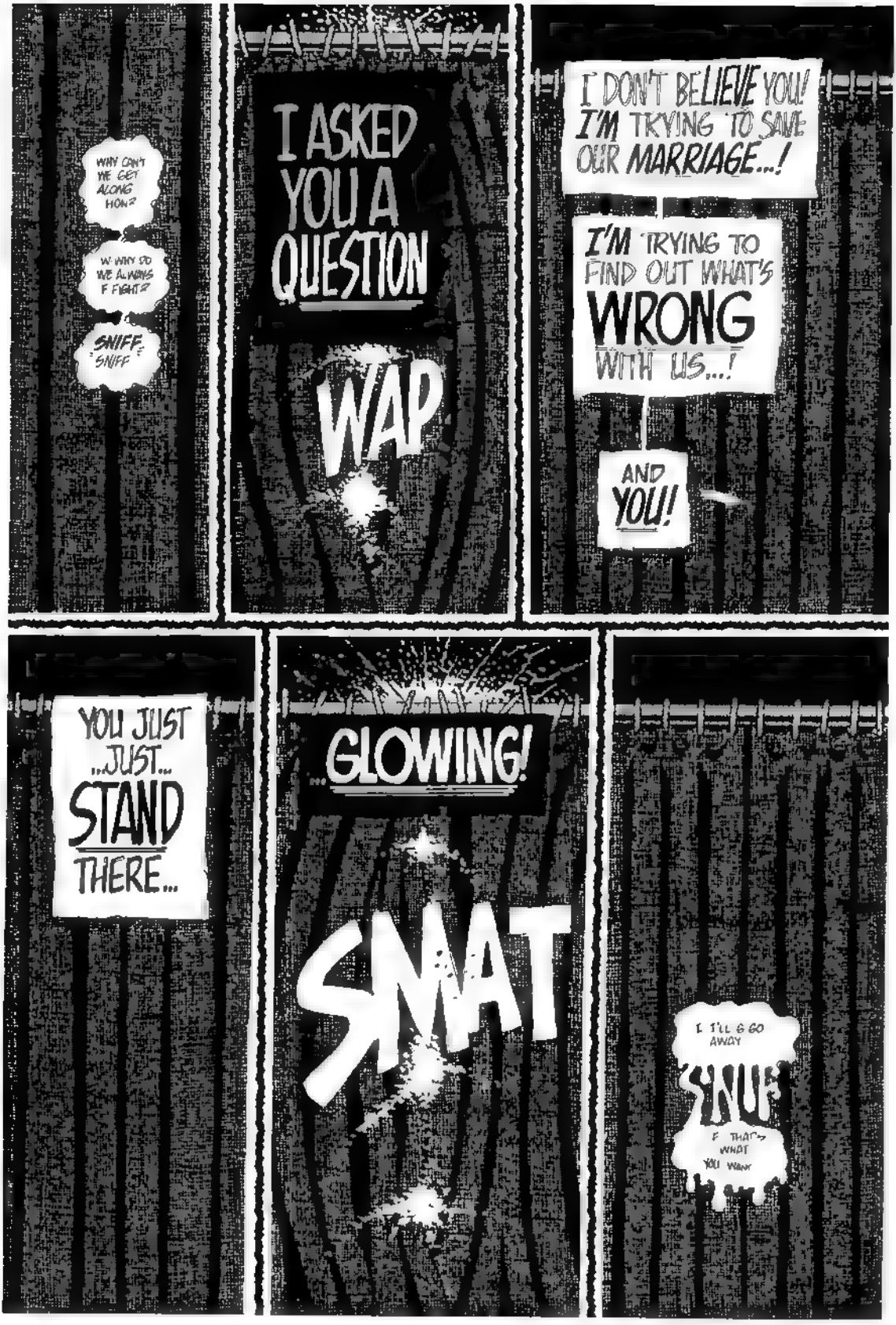
WEISSAHOP'S DEAD.
I KNOW. I THOUGHT WE MIGHT GET A FEW CROWNS OFF ON HIS USUAL FEE ...
I NO THINK SO...
MM.
A KEYPUNCH SNAG.
I KNOW.
WHAT ABOUT YOU!?
'WHAT ABOUT-A ME' WHAT?
WHAT ABOUT YOU BEING THE KEYPUNCH SNAG?
'EY!
ATSA GOOD
ATSA FINE IDEA
LET-A ME SEE ...

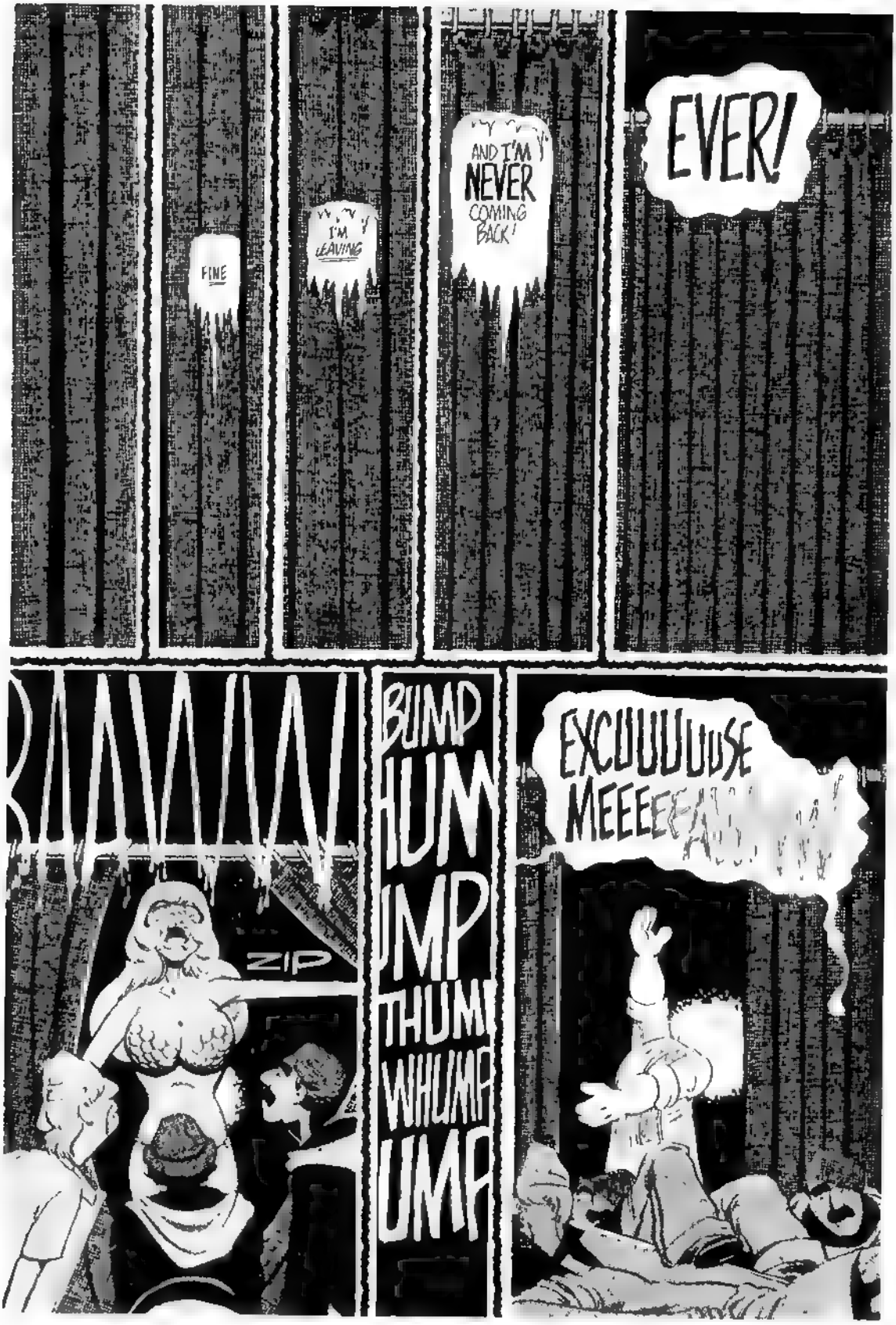
FRIENDS! I'M A KNOW LORDA JULIUS FOR MANY, MANY YEARS
AND..?
AT'S IT
I'M A STUCK
WHAT ABOUT MY LEADERSHIP ABILITIES?
OH YEAH
HIS A LEADERSHIP ABILITIES AS, EVERY-ONE KNOWS, ARE WELL A HIDDEN.
AND TO THINK I WAS AWAKE HALF THE NIGHT WORRIED ABOUT HIGH EXPECTATIONS
I HADDA HIGH EXPECTATIONS ONCE, BUT I'M A DRINK A BIG A GLASS OF WARM, SALTY..
KNOCK KNOCK

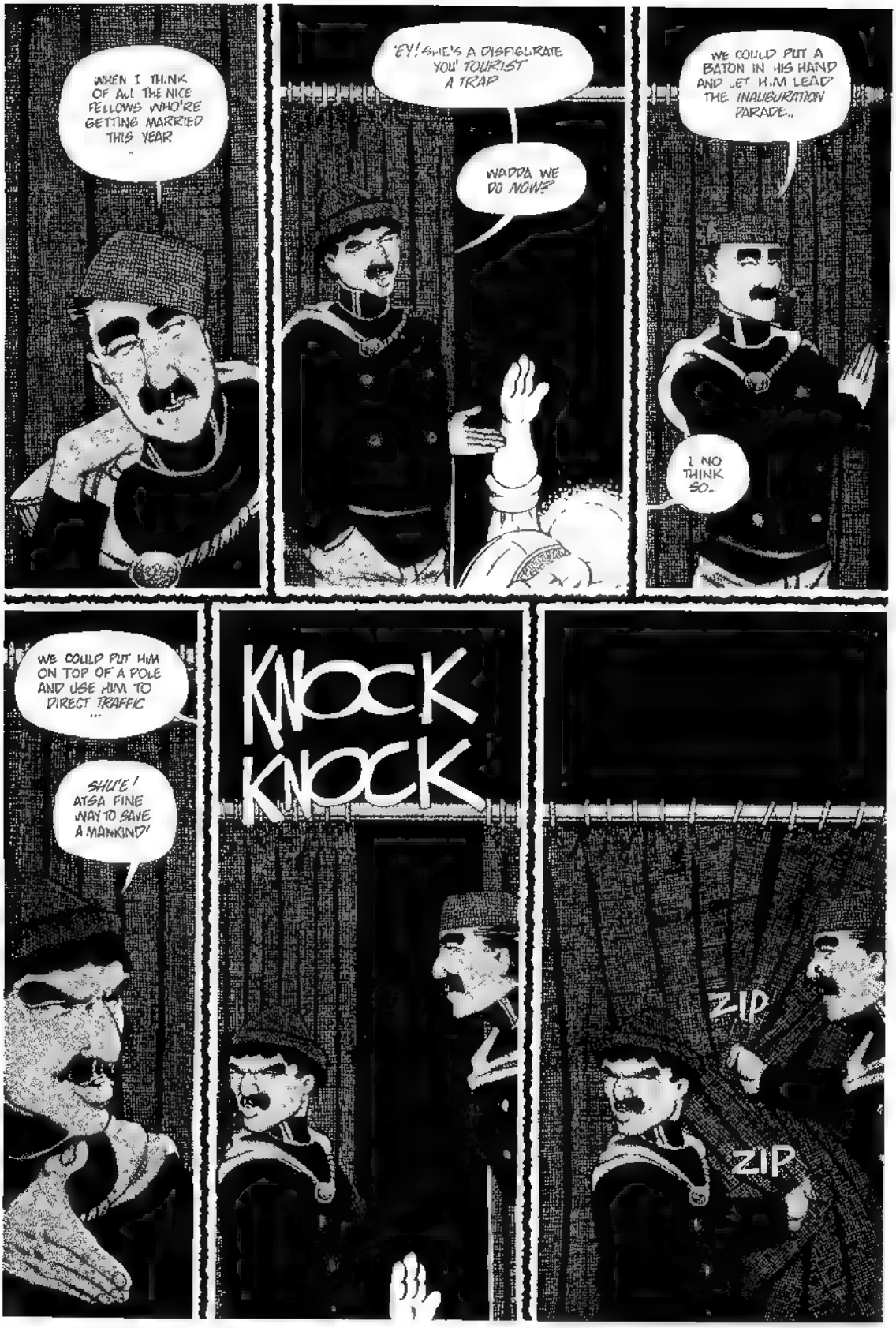
SLAM
ALL RIGHT! WHERE IS HE?
AH! OUR FIRST CUSTOMER
I DUNNO. I THINK I'M A RATHER BE HER POIST CUSTOMER
PSSST
SLATS
YOU'RE ON..
SEE THE
CLINKAE CINKA CLINK
THE
STEPPA RIGHT DIS WAY SEE THE SAVIOUR OF ALL OF US ONLY TWO CROWNS SPECIAL INAUGURATION DAY OFFER - THREE CROWNS IF A YOU WANNA TOUCH HIM..


TOUCH HIM?
I WANT TO BREAK HIS LITTLE NECK
WAL I DON'T KNOW
I THINKA WE MIGHT HAVEA TO CHARGE TEN CROWNS F DAT
AT LEAST
CLINK
CLINK CLINK CLINK
SEE
LIVI
TAR
MEN
WOMEN
CHILDR
THE
BOOBAH?
YOU WAVE THAT TIN CUP N MY FACE ONE MORE-TIME AND YOU'RE GOING TO EAT IT..
SHH
AHA!
SEE HE'S HERE!
THE IVING ARIM
EN ONE CROWN
WHEN TWO CROWNS
LDREN THREE CROWNS
ZIP
EXCUSE LS

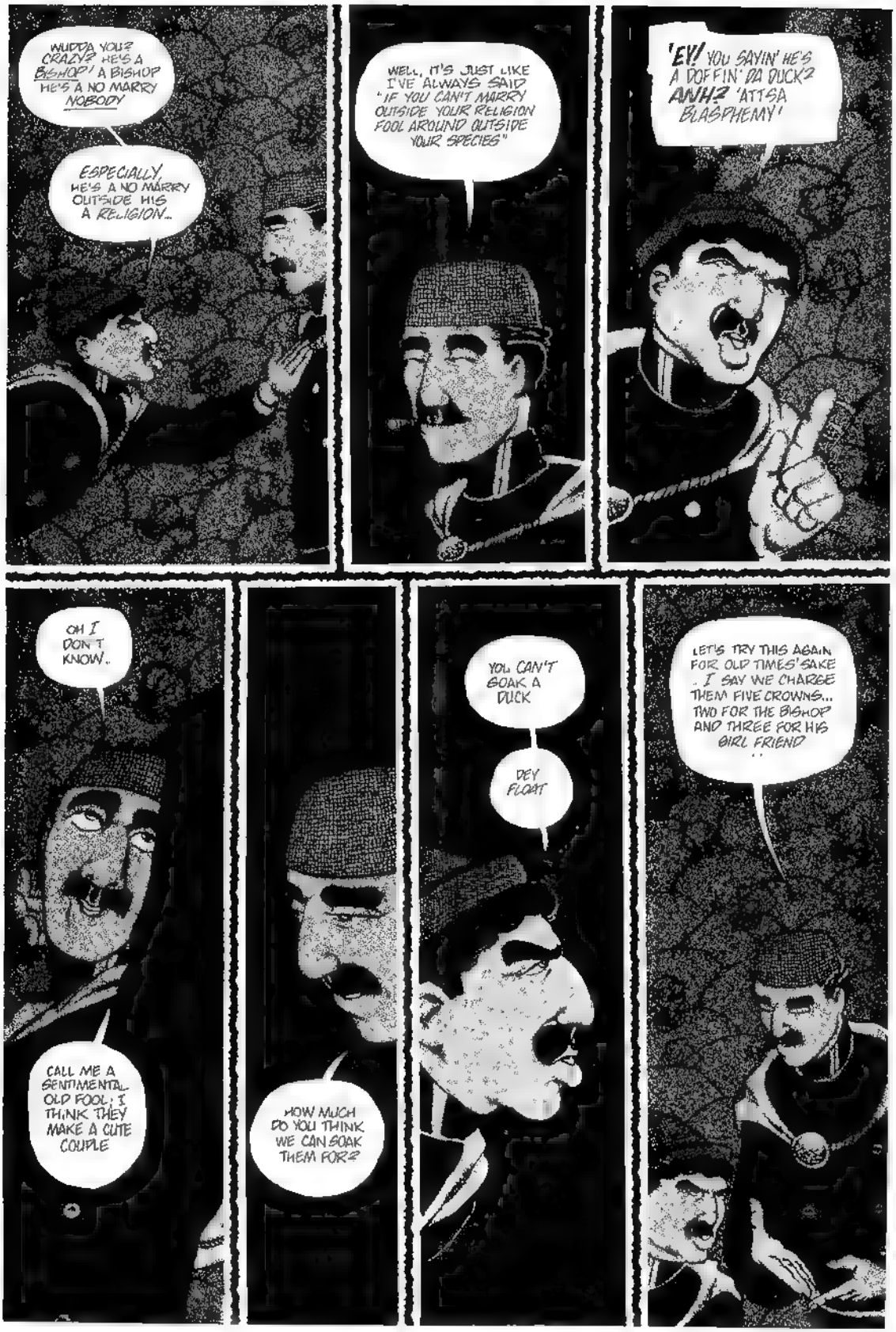

ZIP
ZIP
WHO DO YOU THINK YOU ARE ANYWAY?
I JUST FOUND OUT THAT THE AFTERNOON I LEFT YOU HAD BEAR BRING YOU A SLEAZY BLONDE
DON'T BOTHER TO DENY IT YOU WERE SEEN TOGETHER
SLAP!
SOB
ALL YOU CARE ABOUT IS
SOB! BOOZE
AND SOB!
FOOD AND
SOB!
SEX
YOU NEVER LOVED ME
ALL YOU EVER CARED ABOUT WAS YOURSELF
I HATE YOU! I HATE YOU! I HATE YOU!!
WAP!


WHY CAN'T WE GET ALONG HOW?
W- WHY DO WE ALWAYS F FIGHT?
SNIFF SNIFF
I ASKED YOU A QUESTION
WAP
I DON'T BELIEVE YOU! I'M TRYING TO SAVE OUR MARRIAGE...!
I'M TRYING TO FIND OUT WHAT'S WRONG WITH US...!
AND YOU!
YOU JUST ...JUST... STAND THERE...
...GLOWING!
SMAT
I- I'LL G GO AWAY
SNUF
F- THAT'S WHAT YOU WAN


FINE
I'M LEAVING
AND I'M NEVER COMING BACK!
EVER!
ZIP
BUMP
HUM
IMP
THUMP
WHUMP
UMP
EXCUUUUUSE
MEEEEE


WHEN I THINK OF ALL THE NICE FELLOWS WHO'RE GETTING MARRIED THIS YEAR ...
'EY! SHE'S A DISFIGURATE YOU' TOURIST A TRAP
WADDA WE DO NOW?
WE COULD PUT A BATON IN HIS HAND AND LET HIM LEAD THE INAUGURATION PARADE...
I NO THINK SO...
WE COULD PUT HIM ON TOP OF A POLE AND USE HIM TO DIRECT TRAFFIC ...
SHU'E! ATSA FINE WAY TO SAVE A MANKIND!
KNOCK KNOCK
ZIP
ZIP

COME
IIIIIN'
PST
SLATS
A
FORTISSIMO
CLANKA
CLINKA
CLANKA
CLINK
CL NK
CLINK
CLANKA
NGHH
UNH
GRUNT
NGRRGN
KA
PUFF
PUFF
PUFF
SOUNDS LIKE
ONE OF YOUR
GIRL-FRIENDS
...
WHY,
BISHOP
POWERS
...
AND YOU'VE
BROUGHT THE
LITTLE WOMAN
ALONG..


WUDDA YOU? CRAZY? HE'S A BISHOP! A BISHOP HE'S A NO MARRY NOBODY
ESPECIALLY, HE'S A NO MARRY OUTSIDE HIS A RELIGION..
WELL, IT'S JUST LIKE I'VE ALWAYS SAID "IF YOU CAN'T MARRY OUTSIDE YOUR RELIGION FOOL AROUND OUTSIDE YOUR SPECIES"
'EY! YOU SAYIN' HE'S A DOFFIN' DA DUCK? ANH? 'ATTSA BLASPHEMY!
OH I DON'T KNOW..
CALL ME A SENTIMENTAL OLD FOOL, I THINK THEY MAKE A CUTE COUPLE
HOW MUCH DO YOU THINK WE CAN SOAK THEM FOR?
YOU CAN'T SOAK A DUCK
DEY FLOAT
LET'S TRY THIS AGAIN FOR OLD TIMES' SAKE .. I SAY WE CHARGE THEM FIVE CROWNS... TWO FOR THE BISHOP AND THREE FOR HIS GIRL FRIEND

PUFF
PUFF

THE
LION
OF
SERREA
HAS
BEEN
ASSASSINATED

talking to tarim

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AARDVARK COMMENT

P.O. BOX 1674, STATION 'C', KITCHENER, ONTARIO N2G 4R2

My reason for taking this space (I've gotten some real funny ones; thanks guys) is to address, for the first time, the distributors and retailers. I would imagine some others of you might find it entertaining (or whatever), but my intention is to address myself to those people who feel betrayed, slighted, slapped in the face or whatever by High Society.

****

I got another letter from the chap whose letter I published in issue #88. If you will recall, this was a very reasonable letter from a retailer who wanted to know why I was withholding High Society from the traditional channels of distribution in light of the fact that all of my income (just about) comes from your shops, your warehouses, your drop-ship points. I replied that we had lost a considerable sum of money on "The Animated Cerebus" and that I hadn't come crying to you guys.

In his second letter, he asserts (very reasonably) that he found this answer "evasive" venturing the opinion that since he got stuck with a number of the same portfolio and hadn't come "crying to (me) either" that I didn't have a valid position. Cerebus reprints being proven sellers, constituted a different ballgame altogether and he asked me to have another go at an explanation. I'm paraphrasing but he said "we think you've dealt unfairly. If we're wrong, tell us why".

Not vindictive.

Not malicious.

Just wants the point clarified.

From the time I was a little pudgy Dave with my stomach hanging out of my pants, my father always told me "Life isn't fair" (my mother's phrase was "You can't add things up" which has a tangential but equally valid application here). My dad is right. That was my first reaction and still colours my thinking as regards whether I owe anybody any explanation but as an answer is little more than a rhetorical device.

The next answer was comparative. It is equally unfair that Love and Rockets doesn't sell at least as well as Starbrand; that Flaming Carrot doesn't sell at least as well as Peter Porker; that Raw doesn't sell at least as well as Marvel Age. Aside from containing resonances of Rhetorical Dad, it's a cheap shot since most of you would agree with me that this is unfair.

It also contains a loophole that you could drive a tank through.

"Dave, you're complaining about something we can't do anything about. I can't make Raw Magazine sell like Marvel Age. I can order two hundred Raw magazines and five copies of Marvel Age, but what am I going to do with a hundred and ninety five copies of Raw magazine and a store full of Marvel Zombies screaming for their Marvel Age? On the other hand you can do something. All you have to do is let us order them and send them to us".

True enough. But let's return to the underdog books I've just mentioned. Flaming Carrot, Love and Rockets. Let's add Journey. I think if nothing else characterizes these books, it's the oft-heard "I don't know why it's only selling what it is".

And I daresay the reason you think that, is because you like these books. They are distributor, retailer, warehouse owner, guys-who-are-bagging-books-for-minimum-wage books.

For most of the nine years of its existence, I would say Cerebus has been the King of the I-don't-get-it-what's-with-the-limp-dick-circulation? books.

Thirty three thousand?

At issue ninety?!

I think the fact that so many people who read Cerebus are involved in some capacity in the direct sales distribution network should give you a clue as to what I'm doing here. I'm trying to do a comic book for people who aren't really waiting for somebody really good to revive some old fart super-hero. You're sick of comics, basically. Fuck, man, of course you're sick of comics. Look in the back of your store, the back of your van, the basement of your store, the closets in your store. I mean I like chocolate but if I had to squeeze around boxes of it all day, I'd whoops my cookies.

But that's not the way you felt when you decided it was what you wanted to do. "Oboy! I'll get to see all the comics first and I can read all of them and get posters and stickers and press releases no-one else gets." I think a lot of you are backed off because one of things you'd be sure to scoop a copy of for yourself isn't coming over the fields and through the woods to Grandma's house. Out of the mountain of Product (give or take a few) there are a half-dozen Books you yourself are interested in and I won't send you one I have control over.

Understand here, please, that I am not being bitchy. But with the rapid expansion in the number of shops, mail order houses, subscription services, distribution head offices, warehouse divisions etc I would venture the opinion that a significant number of my sales are to people who are getting the books at cost or at a substantial discount. All of the complaint mail from you guys has added something to the effect of "I haven't paid full retail for comics material in five years and I'm not going to start now."

If the issue is fairness, why should some people pay $1.70 for Cerebus, other people $1.25, other people .50c and other people get them for free from an employer? Why wouldn't the people who get it for free send me the $1.70 because I'm the one who did it? Let's see; ninety issues of Cerebus at half off cover. Ninety times an average of, say, seventy cents.

Say you guys owe me some real bread here!

All right. Yes. This is silly.

So let's try a Genuine Explanation and a Proposed Solution that I feel is fair (we're not voting on it, so let's change that to My Solution).

People are offering me a lot of money for Cerebus. Depending on how much they want to devour, the numbers get pretty wild. For the whole nine yards, DC's offer was in six figures.

Lying in bed at night picturing five zeroes can drive you bugfuck.

The only way I could get any sleep was to find a way to get five zeroes without giving anything away. Six thousand twenty dollar books. Simple as that.

Now. Where to from here?

It presents a problem with the

Cerebus the Barbarian book I plan to issue next year. I can print six thousand of them and sell two books by mail. The year after I can release Church and State in two volumes and sell four books. A total of twenty four thousand books at twenty dollars each (assuming it takes three years to sell the same number of High Society's we've just sold in three months). For me to make the same amount of money from you guys, I would have to sell you (the distributor) about eighty thousand books. That's a lot of books.

But three hundred issues is a lot of books, too. Six thousand pages is a lot of drawing and writing. Twenty-six years is a long time.

Who else has given you that commitment? John Byrne? Superman? Stan Lee? Jim Shooter? Swamp Thing?

I can keep reprinting High Society in lots of six thousand. I can print six thousand Cerebus the Barbarian, I can print six thousand Church and State Volume Ones (books one through three) I can do it as often as I need to for the next sixteen years and for the most part never care if you increase your orders from now until then.

If you think that's unfair, remember I could also charge three dollars a copy. I could triple the minimum order or I could cut each discount by five percent.

I'm not squeezing you by not giving you High Society. I don't want to squeeze you guys. A number of you are good friends. But I have found a way to make money off a book that sells about as well as Captain America in the shops without giving my heart, blood and soul to one of the multi-national corporations.

If you started ordering Cerebus on your next order form so you still have #94's to sell when #150 comes out, I would definitely reconsider keeping an exclusive on the softcover reprints.

You see, I no longer believe that Cerebus can only sell thirty thousand copies a month. I believe it can (and should) be one of the top-selling black and whites. When Pacific and Eclipse and First and all the other little league Marvel and DC publishers started springing up a few years back you threw the full weight of your resources behind them and watched while their circulations dwindled after eight, ten or twenty issues. Your warehouses are full of this stuff. Then artists left titles that you were betting on having some kind of longevity. Now you're doing the same things with the black and white "explosion."

Cerebus is different. You know that the book sells better if you can sell someone the last twenty issues. They get hooked and they keep coming back for more. And in the case of Cerebus there is more to come back for.

Ideally, I would like to see each shop stocked in depth on Cerebus the Barbarian and High Society, and the last twenty issues available at any given time. That way we can all make money and continue to build on the thirty thousand. But orders of two hundred or three hundred books at the distributor level tells me that I am being placed in a trickle-down situation. Once all the distributors and their employees and all the shop owners and their employees have the books, there are one or two out on the shelves. If they sell, the shop back-orders another two. The distributor another ten. If twenty shops order two each, half of them will get one copy each, the other half none for which they will wait patiently until the distributor orders another thirty so he can fill an order now two months old. The books arrive at the shops and go direct to whomever's been bugging the shop-owner for two months. They're not out there on the shelves. You'll order them if you know you can sell them right away. Cerebus is the one book you shouldn't do that with. Why? Because you can't get "stuck" with Cerebus. Would you feel "stuck" with a box of 29, 30 and 31's? How many books even get to 29, 30, and 31. How many books get to issue #50, 112, 147, 183? How many books promise you that they will get there?

In a nutshell, the income on each issue pays our monthly expenses and thank you. But the real money for a book selling as well as Captain America is in big reprint books. Sold direct for cover price. I'm not even willing to talk about selling Cerebus the Barbarian and High Society through you guys until I see some evidence of your investing in the future. Our future; together.

I feel very little obligation to you at this point because I've seen you be very shortsighted about the only comic book that has been allied and co-opertive with you since day one. That has promised to remain allied and co-operative for the next sixteen years.

So the solution is in two stages.

First you have to order Cerebus in quantities that indicate you have confidence that you will still be selling Cerebus in sixteen years. Start with your next order form.

When Cerebus becomes a best-selling black and white comic, we'll see what kind of orders you can come up with on the big books.

If eleven distributors with all of the resources you have at your command can't do as good a job with a five hundred page book as Karen, Joyce, Geoff and a telephone can do, I really think you only have yourselves and your pessimism to blame.

I'm doing the book for sixteen more years. I'm never selling the rights to any part of it. Ever. To anyone. I'm the only person you ever have to deal with.

Come on. Show me what you guys can do.

Bet on Cerebus.

NEXT:
TALKING TO TARIM

Cerebus talks to Tarim and there's a four-page Cerebus Jam story. Colleen Doran and me "The Applicant" (no, the cover-price won't be any higher)

AARDVARK-VANAHEIM, INC.

Hi Guys,

Since the last time I wrote in this space, we have sold over half the print run on High Society. Twenty-nine hundred copies to go.

We've also extended our office hours so you can now order until 7 p.m. every evening Monday to Friday.

And lest we forget; the first edition, consisting of six thousand copies is being sold on a first-come first-serve basis by VISA and MASTERCARD phone orders, certified cheque or money order only. Single copies are $20.00 US and $25.00 CDN plus $2.00 for postage, or 1 box of 18 books for $300.00 US and $400.00 CDN (boxes will be shipped UPS).

Please call (519) 576-7820 or (519) 576-0610 if the other line is busy.

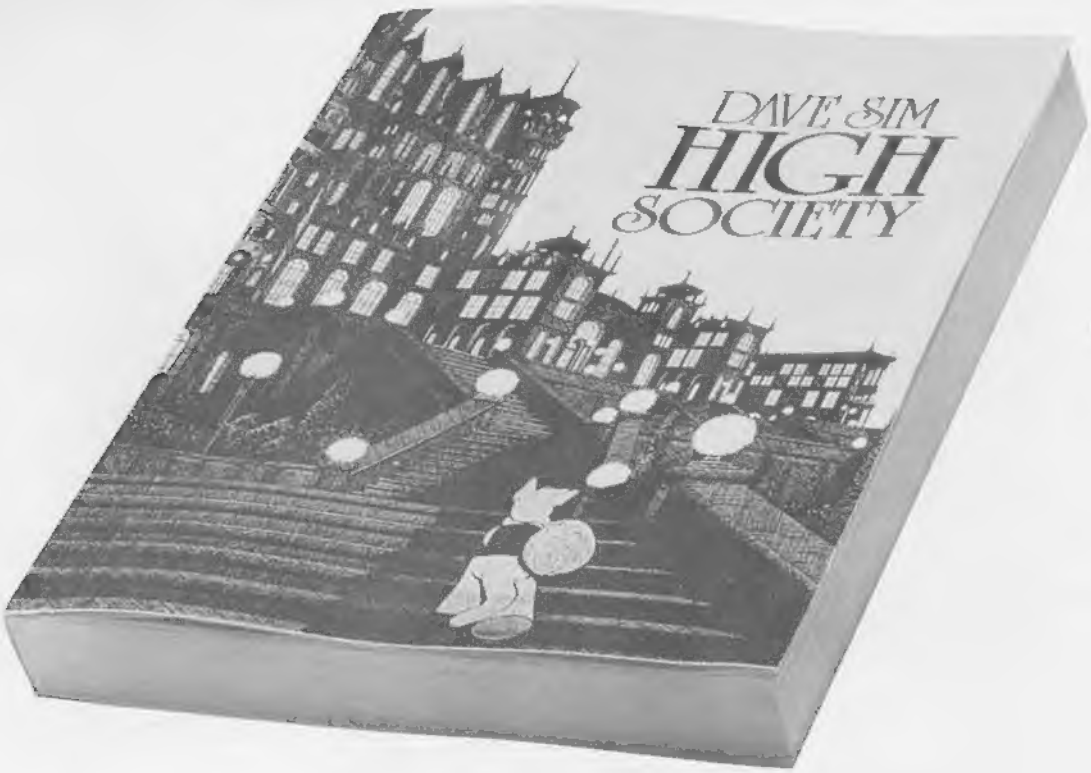
Sincerely,

Dave

Dave Sim, President
Aardvark-Vanaheim, Inc.,

BOX 1674 STATION 'C' KITCHENER ONTARIO N2G 4R2

Order for Valentine's Day



since it's probably too late for Christmas

AARDVARKS AGAINST APARTHEID

BEFORE IT`S TOO LATE.

space donated by the publisher